

MASSACHUSETTS RARE AND ENDANGERED WILDLIFE

LEAST BITTERN (Ixobrychus exilis)

DESCRIPTION

The Least Bittern is 11-14" long with a wingspan of 16-18", making it the smallest member of the Heron Family. It has a black and green head and back with buff and chestnut wing patches, distinguishing it from the larger, dark-winged green heron. The Least Bittern has a slightly crested head and a yellow bill. It also has a rare dark phase which is a rich chestnut color. It is a weak flier and usually walks or climbs through wetland vegetation.

RANGE

Southern Canada and northern United States to southern Texas and the West Indies. Winters from the Gulf Coast south.

STATE OCCURRENCES

Suspected breeding at less than 20 wetland sites scattered throughout Massachusetts.

HABITAT

Freshwater marshes where cattails and reeds predominate.

POPULATION STATUS

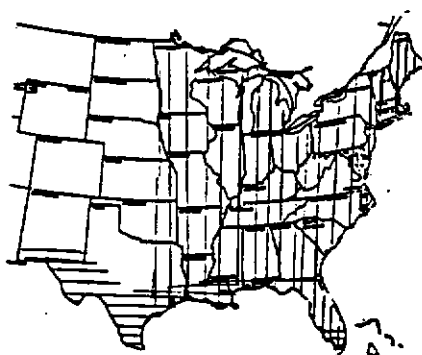
Considered rare and vulnerable in Massachusetts; believed declining throughout its range.

LIMITING FACTORS


Primary cause of rarity is the destruction of wetland habitat.

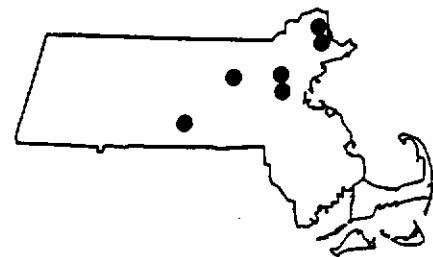


Golden Field Guide Series



 Breeding Range

 Winter Range



• Verified since 1978

Breeding Distribution in Massachusetts
by Town